

An Author's Response

by Charles W. Carter, Professor Emeritus at Taylor University.

The author's reply to Mr. David D. Bundy's criticism of The Person and Ministry of the Holy Spirit: "A Wesleyan Perspective," as published in the April 1975 issue of The Asbury Seminarian.

Since Mr. Bundy's criticism of *The Person and Ministry of the Holy Spirit: "A Wesleyan Perspective"* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1974) contains numerous serious factual errors, it becomes the author's duty to reply to Bundy's entirely negative criticism of this work.

First, Mr. Bundy introduces the author of this book in such a manner as to imply that by criticizing his book he is also bringing under indictment the theological position of the entire modern Wesleyan-Holiness movement, though he is careful to select only such items from the author's biography as may best serve his purpose. What Mr. Bundy does not say is that the author's education, including four earned graduate degrees from leading institutions, and his service and literary contributions are far more extensive than those items he mentions.

Second, Mr. Bundy makes a major mistake when he asserts that "Carter's work is a through-the-Bible summary of the person and ministry of the Holy Spirit very similar in style and content to A. B. Simpson's *The Holy Spirit: Or Power From On High* . . . upon which the author appears to rely heavily" (*The Asbury Seminarian*).

In the first place, the author made no use whatsoever of A. B. Simpson's work either in his research or writing of this book.

In the second place, had Bundy taken time to read the preface to the author's book, and had he noted the nearly 400 footnote documentations throughout the work, he would have seen that in addition to the primary sources of John Wesley, Adam Clarke, and John Fletcher, a vast number of both earlier and contemporary scholars' views are taken under consideration. However, Bundy seems not to have taken note of these

many sources. It will be noted that A. B. Simpson's name does not occur in the index, simply because the author made no use of his work, though he did list two of Simpson's works in the general bibliography.

Third, that the author's work is primarily analytical, rather than a summary treatment as Bundy charges, will become evident to any fair minded reader. The many reviews that have appeared since the release of this book in October 1974 attest this fact. *Christianity Today* (March 14, 1974, p. 28) designates the book one of two "major contributions" on the study of the Holy Spirit published in 1974. Another reviewer in *Christianity Today* (May 9, 1975, p. 16) calls Carter's book "The best contemporary expression," representing the viewpoint of the Salvation Army, the Church of the Nazarene, the Free Methodist and Wesleyan Churches.

Fourth, Mr. Bundy appears to be totally unaware of the author's clear distinction between the largely external and instrumental activities of the Spirit as represented in the Old Testament, where men were motivated by the Spirit to accomplish the will of God, often without personal ethical implications (e.g. Samson), and the inner transforming and purifying work of the Spirit in the lives of individuals and the church in the New Testament, preparing them for righteous living and empowering them for a dynamic redemptive ministry to the world of unconverted men (see Acts 26:18).

Fifth, it is true that the author charges Vinson Synan with near if not actual falsification of history in his propagandistic attempts to show the modern Pentecostal "tongues speaking" movement to be the outgrowth and fruitage of the National Holiness Association (now CHA), and the Wesleyan-Holiness churches in general. It is well known that the largest branch of Pentecostalism, the Assemblies of God, stems in the main from Calvinistic sources even as Synan admits in his book, *The Holiness Pentecostal Movement* (Eerdmans, 1971), and that this major division of Pentecostalism has little affinity with Wesleyanism, theologically or otherwise.

Sixth, Mr. Bundy's charge that the author uses a faulty hermeneutic in his treatment of the "tongues issue" in I Corinthians 12-14 does not stand up to careful examination of the author's work.

Honesty and fairness demand that it be noted that six pages of the author's book are given to a verbatim reproduction of the contemporary work of the well-known New Testament Greek scholar, Boyce W. Blackwelder, *Letters From Paul: An Exegetical Translation* (Anderson, Indiana: Warner Press, Inc., 1970, pp. 62-68, used by permission),

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bearing upon I Corinthians 12-14. Blackwelder's exegetical translation here directly supports the author's interpretation, as also does his treatment of glossolalia in various editions of *Vital Christianity*, from which the book quotes.

Finally, Mr. Bundy's assertion that this book is "anti-Pentecostal in tenor" is only a half truth, and that applied to the limited section of the book which Bundy attempts to criticize — chapters seven and eight. Insofar as the so-called "unknown tongues" doctrine so strongly emphasized by most Pentecostals is concerned, the author admittedly denies that this is a Scripturally valid teaching, feeling that it was evidently imported from pagan sources at Corinth into the church there. On the other hand, the author has no disposition to un-Christianize any Pentecostal brethren who profess a saving relationship through Jesus Christ, or who may profess an experience of the baptism in the Holy Spirit. It is simply to the "unknown tongues" doctrine of Pentecostalism that the author denies any Scriptural basis.

This author takes his position as a progressive evangelical whose doctrinal stance on the Holy Spirit falls within the larger corpus of Wesleyan scholarship in its progressive interpretation of the Scriptures by the best minds of the movement from Wesley himself to the present. Whoever would seek to limit the interpretation of Wesleyanism today to John Wesley himself and alone, without taking cognizance of the total corpus of Wesleyan scholarship can hardly escape the charge of irrelevant antiquarianism. The author would reiterate in conclusion what he has said in his book: "If Wesley's followers have improved upon the structure and expression of his vital doctrine of 'crisis and progressive sanctification' as included in the ministry of the Holy Spirit, Wesley himself would be the first to commend them for their service of love to God and man" (p. 189).